

# Visual Research in Action

Case study: The Tale of the  
Toothpaste

# Research into Practice

All design briefs begin with research questions. These questions should hopefully lead to ideas, that can be turned into possible design practice. What follows is a case study showing, in very simplified form, typical research that might take place to find an appropriate look for a new brand of toothpaste

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## Brief: Research a visual style for a toothpaste brand

Initial research questions might be

- What **kind** of toothpaste is this?
- What is it **promising**?
- What are its **core brand values**?
- How can I **visualise** those promises and values?

# Initial Market Research



There are about a zillion brands of toothpaste, which all do one thing; clean your teeth. All of them make promises, all claim to be special. Step one, do a survey and gather some facts about the 'look' of toothpaste. Analyse findings and make a list of common attributes and values

# After market research some typical common selling points for toothpaste seem to be:

## One: Clinical

- clean
- scientific
- safe
- trustworthy

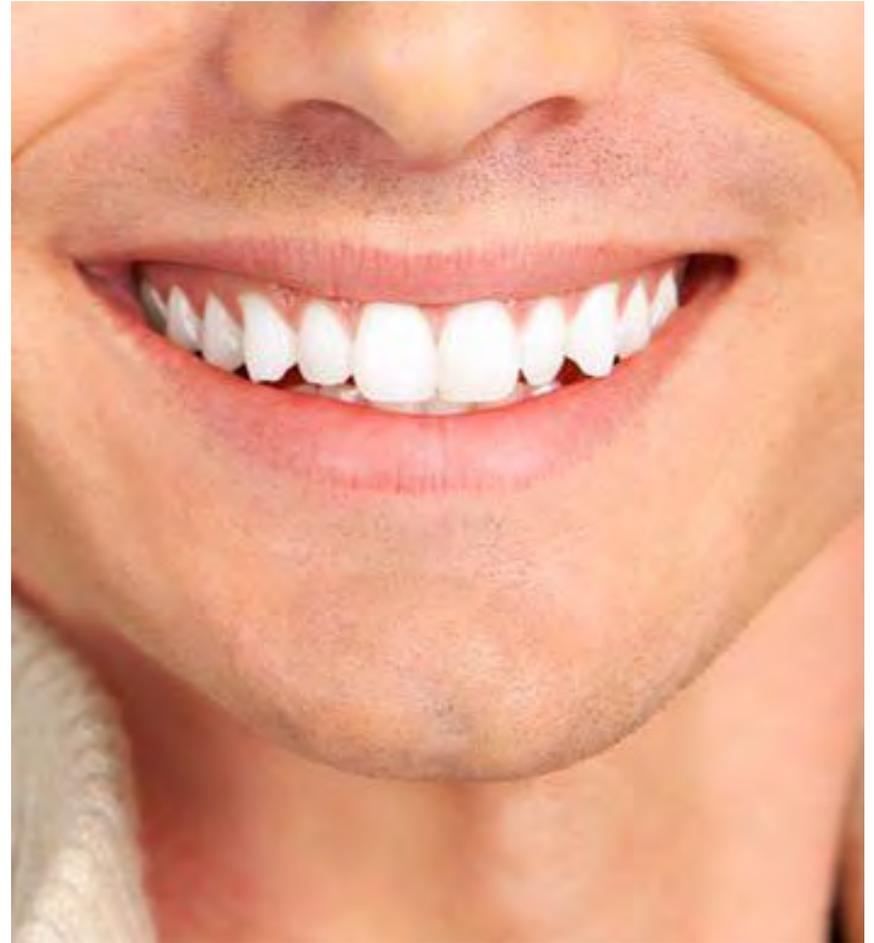
## Two: Fresh

- healthy
- minty
- cool
- energetic

After market research some typical common selling points for toothpaste seem to be:

Three: Cosmetic

- nice breath
- natural beauty
- superior
- desirable



# One Product, Three Possible Messages

Hypothetically, your survey reveals that tooth paste is sold in three different ways, each promising something different, either as an experience or an outcome. These core 'appeals' usually match the preferences of a particular consumer group. The brief will usually be specific about who they are.

We will explore the notion of consumer demographics more fully in a future presentation. As we go through these three options, work out which specific consumer group might be attracted by each one of these three advertising appeals.

# Case Study: Visual Research

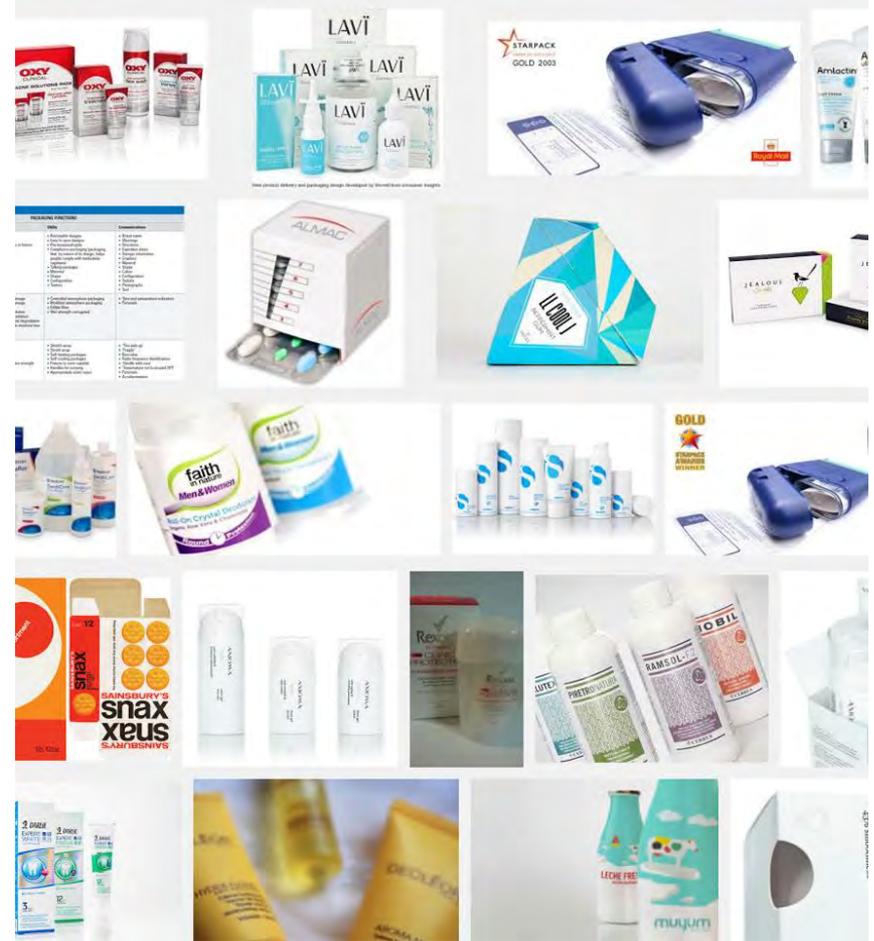
To keep things simple, let's just take one of these core values, otherwise known as appeals, or Unique Selling Propositions, to go through a typical process of evaluation.

From this evaluation we will hopefully come up with some ideas about style and visual language, including typography

# Core Value One: Clinical

- clean
- scientific
- safe
- trustworthy

Research the visual language of 'Clinical'



# Core Value: Clinical



What do people think and feel when you use the work clinical?

What metaphors, colours and shapes come to mind.

Ask the potential consumer.

Who might favour the clinical appeal?

# What Core Values Expressed Here?

Combining type, colour  
and materials

- Clinical
- Pure
- Scientific
- Quality
- Brand name



# Clinical: Scientifically Proven to ...

- Scientific symbols and metaphors
- Conveying special values and attributes to your toothpaste
- Find them, play with them when developing a visual style



Fresh, cold water



What sensations do these shapes and colours inspire ?



Good visual research leads to design directions



For example: Arctic Fresh, Icy Cool



# Research: Typography

- Your visual research should include typographic styles.
- Do not ‘add-on’ typography at the end; it should be an integral part of visual research
- What is ‘Clinical’ looking type?
- Clinical
- Clinical
- Clinical
- **Clinical**

# Research Typography +

- Visual research includes everything ...
- Typo
- Materials
- Colours
- Shapes
- The Product Itself



# Clinical Toothpaste Style



Again, just using the right materials, colours and typography, a clinical style toothpaste brand

The brand name also gives clues

# Brand Naming: Clinical

- Your toothpaste needs a name
- The core value is 'Clinical'
- The visual language says, 'Clinical'
- The name needs to fit with this
- Start with a thesaurus, do some searching and lateral thinking

# Word search: Clinical

- Scientific
- Cold
- Precise
- Clean
- Surgical
- Medical
- White
- Clear
- Accurate
- Hygienic
- Spotless
- Dental
- Sterile
- Pure

# Other relevant naming factors

- Teeth, molars, canines
- Brush, floss,
- Mouth, oral, gums
- Smiles, grins, beams
- Dentists, dental

Perhaps not this!



# Naming a Toothpaste (Taxonomy)

- Functional
  - Oral-B
- Invented
  - Sensodyne
- Experiential
  - Aquafresh
- Evocative
  - Pearl Drops

## Taxonomy of Toothpaste Names

When you Reach for those Pearl Drops to give your mouth an Ultra Bright Super Smile, is your Sure Choice based solely on what will make you the most attractive Close-Up, or is it Ultrabright branding that's taking Aim at you as if yours were the First Teeth to Crest the tide of Oral-B(eauty)?

Here are some toothpaste brand names that put their branding money where your mouth is. This list does not include all the large brands that have many different health and beauty products of which toothpaste is but one.

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5					5
4				Pearl Drops	4
3			Aquafresh	Crest	3
2	Oral-B	Pepsodent	Gleem	Rembrandt	2
1		Sensodyne Topol	Close-Up		1
0	Colgate First Teeth	Auromere Janina Peelu Vicco	Aim NutriSmile Power Smile Reach Super Smile		0
-1	Plus+White	Homeodent Listerine Mentadent Orohyi Viadent Zooth	Sure Choice Complete Care	Apothacary Kingfisher	-1
-2	Healthy Mouth Natural Dentist	Biotene Bioron			-2
	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	

# Be inspired by the Product



- All products have an actual or 'notional' physical nature
- Explore this and experiment with its special qualities to see if there's an idea there
- What about toothpaste type?

# Toothpaste is squidgy



A product's physical qualities should always be explored for visual ideas

# Great for kids ...



Here the product's physical nature has crossed over to the brushes as well as the packaging

# ... and adults



One brand, three ways of using the toothpaste device to signify different qualities

# Optional further research

Feel free to further explore the process of visual research, using the following examples



# Core Value Three: Cosmetic

- Clean
- Fresh breath
- Young and healthy
- Physically attractive

Do some visual research and find out what role those values might have in designing a visual identity/brand for a toothpaste. Who would this brand appeal to? How will that inform your research?



# Conclusion

Hopefully you have learned that visual research leads to ideas about style and message. Linked with an understanding of metaphor, this is a system to help you generate accurate and effective ideas.

This is a very simplified sample of how it's done. Why not use it for your next assignment?

# Visual Research

- Look at it
- Analyse it
- Learn from it
- Use what you learn